

Ergonomic Hand Held Display

Invention

The invention is directed to a method of design of hand held or otherwise hand supported computer displays and integrated tablet style computers, wherein the housing of the display itself is designed to maximize the ergonomic nature of the device and to distribute mass closest to hand holding the device in such a way as to minimize inertial affects from moving the display and carrying it over extended periods of time.

Background of the Invention

Wearable or user-supported personal computers are known in the art and are becoming increasingly pervasive. Examples of user-supported personal computers include U.S. 5,305,244 (Newman I) which discloses a voice-activated, user-supported computer (mobile computer) and U.S. 5,844,824 (Newman II) which discloses a body-worn, hands-free computer system that does not rely upon keyboard input or activation apparatus, both commonly assigned to Xybernaut Corporation of Fairfax, VA. The disclosures of these two commonly owned U.S. Patents 5,305,244 and 5,844,824 are hereby incorporated by reference into this disclosure. For the purposes of this disclosure and claims the term "wearable computer" will be taken to mean a computer such as is disclosed in these two patents or a suitable analogous user supported computer disclosed elsewhere. These computers are typically contained within a single housing which usually connects to an external display. All other essential non-redundant computer components are contained within the single enclosure. A connector port is usually disposed on at least one face of the enclosure with various connectors for external input and output devices. The computer casing is

also designed with attachment means such as belt loop bracket or clip so that the casing may be easily attached to the body of a user or otherwise supported by a user.

Also disclosing wearable computers are U.S. Patent Nos. 5,285,398 (Janik I), 5,491,651 (Janik II), 5,581,492 (Janik III), 5,798,907 (Janik IV), 5,555,490 (Carroll I) and 5,572,401 (Carroll II). Each Janik patent discloses a belt computer containing the elements or components of a computer. For example, in Janik I, the plurality of computing elements are located on the belt and a flexible signal relaying means connects all of the elements for computing. A protective covering is used for enclosing said computer elements. In Janik II, a similar belt computer is described and claimed in which the signal relaying means, the length of which between any two computing elements, is greater than the length of the wearable member between any two computing elements. In each Janik patent, the flexible wearable computer is in the form of a relatively heavy belt comprising around its periphery sequentially positioned computer elements.

Both Carroll I and Carroll II disclose a wearable support and interconnection structure for a modular microcomputer system having a plurality of microcomputer cards housed in a plurality of microcomputer card pockets in a wearable garment. Examples of such garments include a pliable garment worn over the torso of the user (vest), a cap that fits snugly on user's head or in the form of a belt. In one embodiment, the pockets are linked by a plurality of channels extending from pocket to pocket that secure an electronic linking system to the wearable garment. The linking system includes a plurality of flat flexible cables encasing flexible circuitry and microcomputer card connectors. A card connector opens into each pocket to receive a microcomputer card. Each connector is operable, coupled to the cables such

that when microcomputer cards are placed in the connectors and provided with power, an operational microcomputer system is created.

Also known in the prior art are pen tablet style computers, which are keyboardless flat panel screens with integral computer hardware and power supply.

5 Such computers are for use by mobile workers and typically are activated by a pen stylus, voice, external mouse, or other activation device. Lucente et al., U.S. 5,432,720 (herein after Lucente) teaches such a pen based computer. The system of Lucente includes a housing and inetegral flat panel display. It further includes a switch which enables left handed and right handed use as well as portrait and
10 landscape viewing perspectives. The switch allows the use to re-orient the output on the display screen such that it is always vertically oriented to the vertical midline plane of the user's body.

Lucente does not however, teach any design features that make the pen-based computer particularly ergonomic or comfortable for the user, but rather is directed at
15 making the device more convenient. The distinction between comfort and convenience is that the former gets at the actual experience of the user when using the device while the latter addresses the flexibility or plurality of modes of use of the device.

Still further known in the prior art are tablet style computers that are designed
20 for both desktop and hand-held use. Engstrom et al, U.S. 4,611,406 (hereinafter Engstrom) teaches such a multi-purpose tablet style device. The device of Engstrom, a graphics tablet input device, has a switching function for right and left-hand use by an operator. It also contains features such as a stylus that is removably storable within the case, elevation adjustment means by which an operator may adjust the angular

attitude of the case with respect to a work surface. Another feature of Engstrom is the provision of gripping means on the underside of the case to facilitate hand-held operation of the graphic input tablet by an operator. Therefore Engstrom may alternative used as a hand-held device or as a desktop device with means for adjusting the viewing angle. However, except for the provision of handgrips, Engstrom fails to teach any features that truly make the device more comfortable for the user to use.

Another ergonomic display type known in the prior art is that of Kato et al, U.S.6,297,795 (hereinafter Kato). Kato teaches a hand held information processing apparatus having an integral display screen and adapted to be held in the hand of a user and for displaying data in a portrait or landscape mode. The hand held device has a rotary switch disposed on one corner, at a position natural to be accessed by a person's thumb while holding the device. Rotation of the rotary switch permits the change of perspective from portrait to landscape and from left-handed to right-handed use. However, the design of the apparatus of Kato is a miniature screen such that the entire device fits in a single hand such as the PALM PILOT device manufactured and sold by Palm Corporation of Santa Clara, California. Kato does not teach ergonomic design of a hand held display device wherein the device is much larger than a user's hand therefore requiring various ergonomic features to enhance usability and comfort. While these palm type computers have enjoyed immense popularity, their relative small displays, low display resolution and limited processing capability have prevented their use by those who need access to rigorous computing applications.

Kim, U.S. 6,304,431 teaches a detachable display for a portable computer. The portable computer system of Kim includes a hinge system and video cable that allows the display to be offset from the computer while the computer is resting on a

surface. When the user is finished the hinges are retracted and the computer is closed like a clamshell. Kim, however, does not teach a computer system that is designed to be used and held at the same time.

Therefore, there is a need for an ergonomic hand held flat panel display that
5 incorporates certain ergonomic features into its design.

Summary of the Invention

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a novel hand held computer display devoid of the above noted disadvantages of the prior art.

It is another object of the present invention to create a novel hand held
10 computer display device.

It is also an object of the present invention to create a hand held display device that is designed to minimize the burden on the user's wrist while using the display device.

It is a further object of the present invention to create a hand held display
15 device which has angled hand grips designed to increase the comfort to the user.

It is still a further object of the present invention to create a hand held display with a gripping material that is positioned at a point on a hand grip that coincides with the mid point of the average person's hand.

It is yet another object of the present invention to create a hand held display
20 device which has internal weight distributed in such a manner as to minimize inertial effects moving laterally away from the gripping hand to the opposing end of the display.

It is an additional object of the present invention to create a hand held display device that is capable of right handed and left handed use.

These and additional objects of the present invention are accomplished generally by a hand held display device which is designed to minimize the user's burden while using the display device.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the display device is a flat panel, touch-screen type display device used in conjunction with a wearable computer. Wearable Computers are typically supported by a belt or strap around the user's torso, or can alternatively be supported by a garment worn by the user. An example of a wearable computer is that disclosed in U.S. Patent 5,844,824, or a like wearable computer. In this embodiment, the display device will be responsive to at least touch screen input or stylus input. The user will simply hold the display device in one hand while using his finger or the stylus in the other to navigate through software. When not in use, the display device can be stored in a pocket or attached to the same belt which is supporting the wearable computer. The display functions like any other flat panel computer display device, such as that common on laptop style computers with the added feature of a touch screen overlay.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the hand held display device can be used as a display device for a wearable computer while attached to said computer, but can alternatively be used as a thin client device in a stand-alone mode, wherein said mode is characterized by a lack of physical connection to an underlying computer. By "thin client" is meant a limited capability computer such as are sold in the market under the name personal digital assistant. These computers are usually characterized by a limited capability microprocessor such as a DRAGONBALL processor manufactured by Motorola Corporation. They are able to perform simple tasks such as data input and retrieval but are unable to perform robust computationally

intensive applications as are general purpose computers. In this embodiment a user would have the choice of carrying the display device only, if his needs permitted, or carrying the display attached to a Wearable Computer.

In yet another embodiment of the present invention, the hand held display
5 device is a completely integrated computer system. It is a combined flat panel display and computer, such as a laptop style computer, absent a physical interface such as a keyboard. In this mode, all the computing functionality is located in the hand held display allowing the user to carry a single device, rather than a system. A rechargeable power supply is integrated into the hand held display device or can be a
10 separate battery in electrical connection thereto.

In all these embodiments, the distinguishing feature of the flat panel display device of the present invention over those of the prior art is that the display device itself is designed to maximize the user's comfort while using it. This is accomplished by various ergonomic features. One of the primary novel features is the design of the
15 hand grip itself. The grips are designated primary and secondary grips, with the primary grip being the larger of the two. Therefore when a person is using the display device with stylus activation, they will hold it one hand by the primary hand grip and utilize the touch screen with a stylus in the other hand. Either right handed or left handed use may be accommodated by a hardware or software switch which rotates the
20 display content by 180 degrees such that the user is always holding the device by at least the primary hand grip. Alternatively, if the user is reading data off the screen or has relatively long periods between when they need to touch the screen they can hold the display device with both hands, utilizing the primary and secondary hand grips simultaneously. The grips are constructed out of rubber or some other suitable impact

absorbing, electrically shielding, friction enhancing material. In one feature, the hand grips are angled to approximate the natural angle of a person's hand relative to their wrist while using the device. Either side hand grip wraps around the display and is angled inward relative to the plane defined by the display screen itself at an angle less than 45 degrees from said plane towards the back of the display. The rubber hand grips are optimized for a power grip which is defined as a grip characterized by the thumb being placed on the front portion of the grip and remaining 4 fingers on the rear portion. The grip edges are rounded off so that the portion of the grip which rests in the crotch between the thumb and index finger is comfortable to the users. This inward tapering of the grips enables a person to control the movement of the screen more firmly than if the display screen were perfectly flat with squared edges. Secondly, tactile ridges are disposed on the grip, perpendicular to the curved surface created by the hand and running from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the remaining fingers and at locations approximating the position of the pads of a user's fingers. Both the thickness of the grip and position of the tactile ridges are dictated by approximation of the average human hand. This may be as specific as versions for the average male hand and the average female hand, or the grips may simply come in large, medium and small sizes. Another ergonomic feature of the present invention is that the weight inside the display device housing is distributed as close to the primary hand grip as possible to minimize the inertial effects from touching the display screen with a finger or stylus while holding it and using it. In the embodiment where the display device is a display for an externally connected computer, internal electrical components will be located closer to the primary handgrip than the secondary handgrip whenever possible. In the embodiment where the display device is a fully

functional computer, needing no external connection, the primary handgrip itself will contain a detachable integral battery. This will place a significant weight source as close as possible to the user's hand maximizing control and comfort. In the absence of this, the wrist and hand would have to constantly fight against the force of the display moving from contact by a finger or stylus.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG 1 is a to perspective front view of the hand held display of the present invention connected to a Wearable Computer.

FIG 2A is a front plan view of the hand held display device of the present invention.

10 **FIG 2B** is a back plan view of the hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 2C is a top/bottom side plan view of the hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 3 is a front perspective view highlighting various novel features of the hand held display device of the present invention.

15 **FIG 4A** is an end cross section plan view of hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 4B is a top/bottom cross section plan view of the hand held display device of the present invention.

20 **FIG 5** is a perspective view of a person utilizing the hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 6A is a front perspective view of the hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 6B is a side end view of the hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 7 is a perspective view of an integrated embodiment of the hand held display device of the present invention.

FIG 8 is a perspective view of the integrated embodiment of the hand held display device of the present invention detailing the removable power supply.

5 **Detailed Description of the Drawing and Preferred Embodiments**

Discussion of the present invention will now be made with specific reference to the drawing figures. **FIG 1** illustrates the display device **100** of the present invention attached to a Wearable Computer **200** system. The system is comprised of the hand held display **100**, the computer **200**, a video output cable **201**, and a
10 mounting belt **203**. When the display **100** is used in such a system, it is optimally stored in a pouch **202** so that the user doesn't have to hold the display **100** when not using it. In this embodiment, the belt **203** is worn around the waist or torso of the user. Optionally, the system **200** may be attached or embedded into a garment, sash, holster, or other mechanism for attaching the system **200** to the body of a user.

15 **FIGs 2A, 2B, and 2C** demonstrate front, back, and side plan views respectively of an embodiment of the display device **100** of the present invention. **FIG 2A** shows the components of the display **100**, including screen **101**, housing **104**, hand grips **102** and **112** composed of rubber or some other non-skid, flexible, electrically insulating material, video cable **201**, and tactile ridges **103**. While the
20 drawings show 2 or 4 ridges **103**, any suitable number of ridges may be used. Ideally the ridges **103** are located to approximate the locations of the touch points of a human hand while gripping the hand grips **102, 112**. **FIG 2B** illustrates the reverse side of the display device **100** of the present invention. **FIG 2C** illustrates a side view of the present invention, wherein the power button **105** is visible.

FIG 3 illustrates a front perspective view of the display device **100** of the present invention. Visible in this perspective view is the housing **104**, touch screen **101**, disposed on a major front face of said housing **104**, stylus **106**, and hand grips **102, 112**. Stylus **106** may be placed in either receiving opening **110** depending upon whether the user is utilizing the display device **100** in a left handed or right handed mode. Left or right handed use may be affected by either a hardware or software switch. Also possible is the ability to switch between landscape and portrait modes, although due to the position of the handgrips **102** and **112**, landscape is the preferred mode for extended use.

FIGs 4A and **4B** illustrate side and top internal cross section views of an embodiment of the display device of the present invention. In **FIG 4A** can be seen touch screen **101**, flat panel display **107**, housing **104**, rubber sealing gasket **109**, and printed circuit board **108**. **FIG 4B** reveals hand grips **102** and **112**, flat panel display **107**, printed circuit board **108**, power supply circuit **109** and cord **201**.

FIG 5 illustrates a user using one embodiment of the display device **100** of the present invention. With one hand user grips the display device **100** using hand grip **102**. With the other, he uses included stylus **106** to activate the touch screen **101** display.

FIGs 6A and **6B** illustrate an embodiment of the display device **100** of the present invention, in which the cord **201** which runs through the center of the primary hand grip **102**. The grip has a channel **111** in it allowing the cord to always be routed below a person's hand when they are gripping it using the primary hand grip **102**. By use of the channel **111** this is possible with right or left handed use. The cord **201** is simply tucked into the channel **111** so that it doesn't interfere with the user's grip and

the cord **201** stays closer to the user's body so that it minimizes opportunities to become tangled or get in his way.

FIG 7 illustrates an alternative embodiment whereby the display device itself **300** has all the internal components of a computer such that it functions as a full function hand held touch screen computer. **FIG 7** illustrates touch screen **301**, housing **302**, hand grips **303**, **304**, with tactile ridges **305**, and power button **306**.

FIG 8 demonstrates a different perspective view of the display device **300** wherein the battery **310** is detached from the display device **300**. The battery is covered on at least one face by primary hand grip **304**. The battery **310** has power connectors **309** which mate with connectors **308** on the display device **300**. Restraining clips **307** hold the battery **310** in place when it is engaged with the display device **300**.

The preferred and optimally preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described herein and shown in the accompanying drawings to illustrate the underlying principles of the invention, but it is to be understood that numerous modification and ramifications may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of this invention.